

## Château Branaire Ducru 2016

CSPC# 813971

750mlx12

13.49% alc./vol.

CSPC# 891905

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**Grape Variety** 64% Cabernet Sauvignon, 27% Merlot, 6% Petit Verdot, 3% Cabernet Franc.

**Appellation** St Julien

**Classification** Fourth Growth. Quatrieme Grand Cru Classe in 1855.

**Website** <http://www.branair.com/>

**General Info** Château Branaire-Ducru is situated on the opposite side of the road from Château Beychevelle in the south of the St-Julien appellation. The Château has its origins in the 17th century, when it formed part of the estate of Château Beychevelle. After the latter's owner died in debt, the land was parceled up and sold off, with Jean-Baptiste Braneyre acquiring the Branaire hectares in 1680 (the name has metamorphosed across the centuries). Braneyre's daughter married Pierre de Luc and the estate passed down through the De Luc family and later the related Ducru family for over 140 years. The last family members to own it were three noble nephews who are represented by the crowns on today's Branaire label. In 1919, Branaire-Ducru was sold to the Tapie family, but its modern renaissance had to wait until 1988 and the influences of the Maroteaux family, under whose direction the wine's quality has surged. Patrick Maroteaux has invested heavily in new plantings as well as installing a spanking new cuvier and an ultra-modern chai.

**Winemaker** Jean-Dominique Videau

**Vintage** 2016 St. Julien is a perfect vintage. Or if you think this is hyperbole, I can change that to almost perfect. Every vineyard in this appellation made prodigious wine. Some of the estates, due to the perfect storm of having a new cellar, extraordinary climatic conditions and the financial willingness to make the best wine possible produced the best wine in their long-storied history! 2016 Saint Julien did not start out with much promise. The flowering in the Left Bank took place under good conditions. But the majority of the first half of the year will be remembered for being late, and for the continuing deluge of water that soaked the vineyards. Growers knew much had to work to work in their favor from this point forward, as wet, and late are not descriptors that bring smiles to their faces.

By late June, warm, sunny and dry were the new normal. The Indian summer conditions were almost too much. The summer set records for the lack of rain. Young vines were in danger of dying. Plants were close to stopping their growth cycle and many people were worried about this becoming a difficult vintage. But the cool nights, which is where the much needed freshness came from helped and the rains that fell September 12 and 13 showed that Bacchus must love Bordeaux, because they saved the vintage! The harvest took place at a leisurely pace under outstanding conditions. The rest as they say is history. For details on the growing season and harvest report: 2016 Bordeaux Harvest and Growing Season Report 2016 St. Julien wines have it all going on. They are in such a beautiful style with their richness, ripe, velvet, textured tannins, concentration, freshness and elegance. There are no hard edges here, just delicious tasting wines made from perfectly ripe grapes. Lower in alcohol than the more recently fabled 2009 and 2010 vintages, plus depth and a wealth of raw material, if you're a fan of these wines, this is a vintage to consider laying down. While most of the Saint Julien is classified, every chateau made truly great wine.

**Vineyards** Château Branaire-Ducru is tucked away in the south-eastern most part of the St Julien appellation, close neighbours being Beychevelle, which lies between Branaire-Ducru and the *Gironde*, and Château Saint-Pierre. The vineyards run west-east in several plots close to the *château*, over typical Médoc terroir of Quaternary alluvial gravels. There are 52 hectares in all, planted with 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 22% Merlot and just 5% Cabernet franc and 3% Petit Verdot, with an average age approaching 40 years, although there are many vines approaching a century.



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| <b>Harvest</b>       | Harvesting took place from September 28 to October 19.   |
| <b>Maturation</b>    | Aging in oak barrels for 16 to 20 months with 60 to 65% of new oak. Woods selected in various French forests according to their flavours and tannins quality. Light toasting respecting the wine's fruit and aromatic purity   |
| <b>Tasting Notes</b> | This wine typifies the best of the 2016 vintage: purity, precision and elegance. This wine jumps from the glass with loads of black cherry, cola and flowers - while the palate displays layers of sweet supple fruit. Maintaining focus throughout, the tannins are soft and fine leaving you with a delightful spice note at the conclusion. So well-constructed, it is an absolute classic!   |
| <b>Serve with</b>    | Chateau Branaire Ducru is best served at 15.5 degrees Celsius, 60 degrees Fahrenheit. The cool, almost cellar temperature gives the wine more freshness and lift. Young vintages can be decanted for 2-3 hours. This allows the wine to soften and open its perfume. Older vintages might need very little decanting, just enough to remove the sediment. Chateau Branaire Ducru is best served with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted, braised, stewed and grilled dishes. Branaire Ducru is also good when served with Asian dishes, hearty seafood or fish like tuna, mushrooms, pasta and cheese.   |
| <b>Production</b>    | 15,000 cases made  |
| <b>Cellaring</b>     | Drink 2019-2038  |
| <b>Scores/Awards</b> | <p><b>96 points</b> - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 2019</p> <p><b>94-97 points</b> - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - Web Only 2017</p> <p><b>92-94 points</b> - Neal Martin, Wine Advocate #230 - April 2017</p> <p><b>95 points</b> - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - February 2019</p> <p><b>95-96 points</b> - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - March 2017</p> <p><b>95 points</b> - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - May 2019</p> <p><b>95-97 points</b> - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 2017</p> <p><b>17 points</b> - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - October 2018</p> <p><b>17 points</b> - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - May 2018</p> <p><b>17 points</b> - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - April 2017</p> <p><b>94 points</b> - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - April 2017</p> <p><b>95 points</b> - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - February 2019</p> <p><b>94 points</b> - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - May 2018</p> <p><b>94 points</b> - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 2017</p> <p><b>91 points</b> - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com - April 2017</p> <p><b>15.5+ points</b> - Farr Vintner - February 2017</p> <p><b>89-93 points</b> - Derek Smedley, MW - April 2017</p> <p><b>93 points</b> - Neal Martin, Vinous - January 2019</p> <p><b>93+ points</b> - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - January 2019</p> <p><b>92-95 points</b> - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - April 2017</p> <p><b>92+ points</b> - Jeb Dunnuck MW - February 2019</p> <p><b>18.5+ points</b> - Matthew Jukes, MW - April 2017</p> |
| <b>Reviews</b>       | <p><i>"The core of this red is loaded with pure plum, blueberry and black currant fruit flavors. The polished structure is integrated, with alluring ganache, anise and sweet tobacco notes throughout, all in a polished and balanced frame. A very classy red that isn't shy about its power but pushes its purity to the fore. Best from 2024 through 2039. 15,000 cases made."</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"A fresh bay leaf note leads off, followed quickly by pure, enticing layers of cassis, blackberry and black cherry fruit that emerge steadily through the long finish. Offers lovely mouthfeel and purity. A very pretty expression of St.-Julien. Score range: 94-97"</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"The 2016 Branaire-Ducru is a blend of 64% Cabernet Sauvignon, 27% Merlot, 6% Petit Verdot and 3% Cabernet Franc picked from 28 September until 19 October at 50 hectoliters per hectare, one of the longest harvest periods at the estate. The nose is quite intense with black fruit infused with pencil shaving and a touch of tobacco, unashamedly classic in style, a little distant compared to some other Saint Juliens but undeniably well-</i></p>  |

**Reviews** *defined and full of character. The palate is structured and masculine, exerting a firm grip in the mouth, spicier than its peers with cracked black pepper complementing the black fruit, tobacco and smoke towards the structured finish. There is great length here, very persistent in the mouth, a little "rougher" in texture than others, but that will be smoothed out during élevage and in bottle. Give this Branaire-Ducru five or six years in bottle because it has great potential, one of the best produced at the estate in recent years. (NB This sample was taken from a new barrel, though the final blend will be 60%)."*  
- NM, Wine Advocate

*"The best vintage of this wine since 2009! Effusive, fresh redcurrant and cassis aromas give this St.-Julien terrific drive and energy, the elegant, dry tannins beautifully married to the medium body, right through the long, agile finish. Drink or hold."*  
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

*"This is clearly the best wine I have tasted from Branaire-Ducru. Exquisite depth and richness are on offer, yet this is always framed and focused. Layers of fruit and tannins. So deep and long. Incredible quality."*  
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

*"The estate, at the southern end of Saint-Julien, has produced a wine that is both structured and stylish. This bold, ripe wine shows opulent black fruits and generous tannins. Juicy and structured, it has good aging potential. Drink from 2025."*  
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

*"Superbly ripe and juicy, this is a solid, powerful wine that also is packed with black currant fruits. It is richly structured, concentrated and ready for long-term aging. (RV)"*  
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

*"Concentrated purplish crimson. Intensity and a real St-Julien edge and balance to this wine on the nose. Juicy and polished. Lively and transparent. Great texture and future."*  
- JR, JancisRobinson.com

*"64% Cabernet Sauvignon, 27% Merlot, 6% Petit Verdot, 3% Cabernet Franc. Deep crimson. Quite intense with some gloss and evident ripeness. Lots of tannins and not overdone. Great polish."*  
- JR, JancisRobinson.com

*"Juicy, savoury nose. Fresh and fine-boned. Could only be bordeaux – tant mieux! Silky texture with some energy."*  
- JR, JancisRobinson.com

*"Always a supremely elegant, measured take on St-Julien that delivers in spades in 2016. Plush damson fruit comes through with just the right level of extraction. Beautifully rich, ripe fruit is joined by touches of oak at exactly the right moment. An exceptional showing from Branaire that rises above its 2015. Drinking Window 2027 – 2045"*  
- JA, Decanter.com

*"It is hard to say what worked better here, the soft, silky tannins, the freshness in the fruit, the purity in the berries or the elegant stylings. The cassis and boysenberry fruits make an impression on the nose and the palate. This should age for decades."*  
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

*"Elegant, polished, bright, fresh and clean, with a purity of fruit that stands out. Everything here is in balance from the silky tannins to the sweetness in the bright, red fruits. The wine lingers and expands."*  
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

**Reviews** *“Spicy boysenberry and sweet cassis with licorice and a kiss of oak on the nose, this wine displays elegance and a natural goodness of fruit. Oddly it gives the impression of fading in the mouth but it’s all an illusion as the essence rushes back in and lingers. Produced from a blend of 64% Cabernet Sauvignon, 27% Merlot, 6% Petit Verdot and 3% Cabernet Franc, the wine reached 13.49% alcohol with a pH of 3.59. Harvesting took place from September 28 to October 19, which is the latest as well as the longest harvest in the history of Branaire Ducru.”*  
- JL, [thewinecellarinsider.com](http://thewinecellarinsider.com)

*“A classic Saint Julien Chateau that has pushed the quality level up considerably in recent vintages under owner Patrick Maroteaux and winemaker Jean-Dominique Videau. It produces wines of real St Julien class and structure. 60 hectares of vines planted with 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 22% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc and 3% Petit Verdot. The Chateau believe their wine is close stylistically to their 2010. 64% Cabernet Sauvignon, 27% Merlot, 6% Petit Verdot, 3% Cabernet Franc. Dark fruits and cedar on the nose with a touch of pencil shavings. The palate is firm and fresh with classic medocain tannins and lively acidity but cool, ripe blackcurrant fruit. Balanced, long and pure on the finish.”*  
- Farr Vintners

*“The nose has a mix of fragrances the start of the palate is fresh. There is mid sweetness supple rich black fruits the tannins are fine and ripe fresher more of a bramble character at the back with sweetness on the finish.”*  
- Derek Smedley MW

*“The 2016 Branaire Ducru has a fragrant bouquet of plush blackberry and graphite aromas, hints of bilberry and briar developing in the glass. The medium-bodied palate is quite succulent and multilayered, offering supple tannin and gentle grip on the finish. Real potential here. One of the best Branaire Ducru in recent years. Chapeau! Drink 2023-2055”*  
- NM, Vinous

*“The 2016 Branaire-Ducru is powerful, dense and explosive to a degree that is surprising for a wine that is typically much more sensual. There is lovely definition throughout, but readers will have to be patient to catch the 2016 at its very best. Hints of leather, smoke, tobacco and dried flowers begin to open up in the glass, but the 2016 is quite reticent at this stage. In two tastings I found the 2016 unusually closed. Needless to say, it will be interesting to see what time brings. Drink 2026-2046.”*  
- AG, Vinous

*“Branaire-Ducru is gorgeous in 2016. A rush of inky blue/purplish fruit, licorice, violet, lavender and dark spices give the wine its rich, textured feel. Gracious and nuanced, in the classic Branaire style, the 2016 possesses lovely depth and sensuality, with no hard edges and terrific overall balance. Time in the glass brings out the wine's more floral and spiced notes. Above all else, Branaire is a wine of finesse despite its considerable intensity. It is also arguably the most polished of the Saint-Julien. Tasted two times.”*  
- AG, Vinous

*“The 2016 Château Branaire-Ducru checks in as a blend of 64% Cabernet Sauvignon, 27% Merlot, 6% Petit Verdot, and the rest Cabernet Franc. This medium to full-bodied, downright pretty Saint-Julien has a complex, layered style in its mulberries, blackberries, saddle leather, and forest floor aromatics, with hints of graphite developing with time in the glass. Possessing terrific tannins, nicely integrated acidity, and a great finish, I’d certainly be happy to have bottles of this in the cellar. Give it a few years and it promises to shine for 20-25 years. 2021 - 2046.”*  
- Jeb Dunnuck

*“A brilliant Branaire and one of the most shocking and memorable wines of the week, there are stunning aromatics here and a huge finish. This is a triumph for this estate, and I love the way it gives the illusion of being a richer wine, but it is a focused, epically balanced creation. The nose is heroic, and this alone warrants a huge score. That the finish is also sublime makes this one of the hidden gems of the Left Bank in 2016.”*  
- MJ, [matthewjukes.com](http://matthewjukes.com)

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